

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

by Mark Twain

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Item No. 200495

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

Objectives

By the time the Unit is completed, the student will be able to:

1. understand the literal events in the story and enjoy the comic adventures.
2. read selected passages of dialect *aloud* and understand their meaning.
3. define “irony” and point to at least five examples from the novel that illustrate this definition.
4. discuss the development of the following major themes in the novel:
 - Huck Finn’s “rite of passage”
 - Man’s inhumanity to man
 - Individual sympathy in conflict with the laws and expectations of one’s culture
 - The restrictions on one’s freedom in society as opposed to the freedom to live outside of civilization
 - The cruelty/oppression of slavery and the dehumanizing of the black people by the white nineteenth-century culture
5. discuss the elements in this novel that prompt critics to label it as one of the most important works in American literature.
6. note and discuss these objects of Twain’s satire:
 - Sentimentality (being influenced more by emotion than reason) and gullibility (being easily tricked, cheated, or fooled)
 - The average man
 - Traditional concepts of religion
 - Romantic literature with its mournful subject matter in poetry and in ridiculous plots in novels
 - A code of honor that results in needless bloodshed

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Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Explain why this novel is sometimes seen as a “rite of passage” story. Consider how Huck is at the beginning, what ordeals he undergoes, and how he survives at the end.
2. Define the term “irony” and cite four examples from the novel that support your definition.
3. By citing incidents from the novel, demonstrate that a major theme is “man’s inhumanity to man.”
4. Trace the development of Huck’s troubled conscience. What is his problem, and how does he finally resolve it?
5. Explain why Huck decides to “light out” for the Indian territory rather than stay with Aunt Sally and be “sivilized” again.
6. Prove the following thesis by citing passages or incidents from the novel:

On the river, Huck finds peace and freedom. When on land, he has to deal with human gullibility, greed, corruption, and cruelty.
7. In what ways is Jim a less-developed character at the beginning and at the end of the novel than he is in the middle of the novel?
8. List as many points of contrast as you can between Tom and Huck.
9. Why do you suppose Ernest Hemingway said that all modern American literature began with *Huckleberry Finn*?
10. A work of literary art is frequently described as a book that has something important to say and says it with great artistry. What important comments on the human experience does this book make?
11. Identify passages from the novel in which Twain satirizes the average man, human gullibility, and romantic literature.

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Chapter I

Vocabulary

commenced – started
kin – relation
middling – moderately
victuals – food

1. What is your reaction to Twain’s “Notice”? Is it meant to be taken seriously, humorously, or what?

2. Why does Twain purposely misspell the word “civilize” in the second paragraph?

3. In Huck’s mind, what does being civilized involve?

4. A frequently used technique of Twain’s is irony. What is ironic about Huck’s joining Tom Sawyer’s band of robbers?

Chapter V

Vocabulary

cussed – cursed
hifalutin' – flowery; pompous
stanchion – post
temperance – restraint; moderation

1. What is your opinion of Huck's father?

2. What did Pap tear up and why?

3. How is the new judge in town at first taken in by pap?

4. What is Twain saying in the last paragraph of the chapter about pious people who believe in goodness and ignore reality?

Chapter X

Vocabulary

notion – idea

1. Why does Jim feel so strongly about *not* talking about the dead man?

2. What bad luck happens to them? Why is it Huck’s fault?

3. What is humorous about the digression Huck gives on “looking at the new moon over your left shoulder.”

4. As the chapter ends, where does Huck go and why?

Chapter XX

Vocabulary

benefactors – those who help others

cipher – figure

concern – business; establishment

dissipating – spreading thin and eventually vanishing

haughty – proud

histrionic – theatrical; overly dramatic

mire – mud

sockdolager – exceptional blow

1. Critics say that Twain is satirizing excessive religious fervor in the camp-meeting incident. What is your opinion? Is he satirizing it or simply describing it?

2. What has the duke done that will allow them to run the raft during daylight hours?

Chapter XXIX

Vocabulary

ingenious – clever
sluice – stream

1. Chapters 27, 28, and 29 move along quickly and hold the reader’s attention. Why?

2. At the end of this chapter why is Huck first elated, then depressed?
